



# MICROCOSM

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## *A Daddy's Duty*

The scene is a front porch with several rocking chairs; an elderly man with white hair and faded overalls slowly rocks in one chair as he stares silently toward the road. He clutches a paper bag in one hand. At his immediate right is the front screen door, which, when slammed, stuns him. He fixes his startled eyes on his son who is now standing by his side.

**John:** It's time, Daddy.

**Daddy:** I know, son.

**John:** Well, I guess we better be going — ain't much time left before dark.

**Daddy:** Yep.

**John:** You wanna walk or you want me to get one of the horses?

**Daddy:** I'll walk.

**John:** Now it ain't no trouble for me to get a horse for you.

**Daddy:** I'll walk.

**John:** It really ain't no . . .

**Daddy** (interrupting a little louder): I said I'll walk.

**John:** Yes, sir.

(Daddy tries to get up, falters and John reaches for his arm).

**Daddy** (ignoring the offered arm): I don't need no help.

**John** (soothingly): Now, Daddy . . .

**Daddy** (angrily): And don't "now Daddy" me either — leave me alone.

**John:** Yes, sir.

(The old man finally gets up and starts slowly across the porch and down the steps; John follows).

**John:** Whatcha got in your sack?

**Daddy:** Apple and some pork and beans.

**John:** That be enough?

**Daddy:** Get me through the night.

**John:** Only one night?

**Daddy:** Only one night.

**John:** Daddy?

**Daddy** (irritated): What?

**John:** You don't mind doing this, do you?

**Daddy:** I'm your daddy, ain't I?

**John** (annoyed at the response): Now what's that supposed to mean?

**Daddy:** Ain't I always done what's best for you? Didn't I tie cardboard soles on the bottom of my shoes so you could have the extra money to go to the fair and eat cotton candy all day? Didn't I damn near kill myself working on the land to provide . . .

**John** (interrupting annoyed): All right, Daddy, that's enough — I've



heard your stories enough times. What do you want me to do to pay you back? God knows I've tried. (changing the subject abruptly) You're upset over this whole thing now ain't you? All you got to do is say the word, and we'll stop right now.

**Daddy:** No, son, I'm your daddy, and when me and your mama had you, we knew this time would come. It's only normal.

**John:** You sure you don't mind?

**Daddy:** Yep.

(The men are walking into the woods now. The old man begins to slow his already crawling speed. He comes to a tree, seems to recognize it and stops).

**John** (concerned): Is it your heart, Daddy?

**Daddy** (preoccupied): Nope.

**John:** Your stomach hurting again?

**Daddy** (staring silently at tree): Nope.

**John:** Your legs paining you?

**Daddy:** Nope.

**John** (exasperated): Well, what the hell is it?

**Daddy** (without emotion): An oak tree.

**John** (embarrassed): Oh.

**Daddy:** This is it, son.

**John** (looking around distastefully): Here?

**Daddy:** Yep.

**John:** It ain't much here but a tree and a few scrawny blueberry bushes and some trampled down grass.

**Daddy** (firmer): **This is it.**

**John:** Yes, sir.

(Daddy sits down, folds his arms and closes his eyes. The paper sack lies motionless in his lap. John shifts from one leg to the other).

**John:** Daddy?

**Daddy:** What, son?

**John:** This is it, huh?

**Daddy:** Yep, for sure.

**John:** Well, I guess you don't need me for anything else, huh?

**Daddy:** Nope, I reckon I don't.

**John:** You sure?

**Daddy:** I'm sure, son.

**John:** Daddy?

**Daddy** (not even bothering to open his eyes): What?

**John:** How long you reckon you'll be here?

**Daddy:** Day or two.

**John:** That's not too long.

**Daddy:** Long enough. (pauses a moment and then speaks again) Pork and beans be gone shortly. (another pause) And I'm fixing to eat my apple right now.

**John:** Well, uh, Daddy, I guess I'll be going.

**Daddy:** Yep.

**John:** You don't mind.

**Daddy:** Nope.

**John (backing away):** Need anything before I go?

**Daddy:** Nope.

**John (relieved):** Well, I better be going before it gets too dark to see. Molly said she'd have supper on the table by 7:00.

**Daddy:** Yep.

(John turns and begins to take long strides. When he's out of sight, the old man calls him).

**Daddy:** Son?

**John (from the woods):** Huh?

**Daddy:** One thing, son.

**John (again from the woods, no louder, no softer):** Yeah?

**Daddy:** Don't want no pine box — want one out of this here oak, okay, son?

**John (barely audible):** Yes, sir.

**Daddy (sighing):** Thanks, John.

(There is no answer).

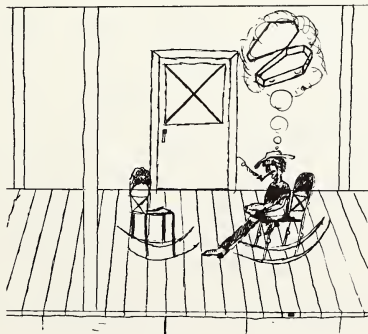
**Daddy (repeating louder):** I said, "Thanks, John."

(Still no answer).

(He slumps under the tree, pulls out the apple and takes a bite. He mutters as a single tear falls).

**Daddy:** That damn idiot better not put me in no damn pine box.

**Tammy Lyon**



## Alford Lake: A Way Of Life

Paul Len was only an average sized man with features barely distinguishable from anyone else. His wind tossed, rather longish hair and his scraggly red beard, however, seemed to give his sparkling blue eyes wisdom beyond their years. He walked with a slight stoop and a light step. His garb, down to his moccasins, marked him as an outdoorsman. Dressed in a fringed buckskin jacket and faded jeans, he was flanked by a grisly hunting knife on one side and a western style six-shooter on the other. His outfit was completed by a battered cowboy hat perched jauntily atop his rangy frame. As a young boy of sixteen, it was not so much his physical appearance however, but his spirit that attracted me to him.

Paul Len's credits were many; as a woodsman he was an accomplished hunter, tracker, and fire-builder. Then at night, around the fire, he would produce an old, memory-scarred guitar and sing the songs of the outdoor life, songs to make one happy and songs to make one cry. But Paul Len was more; he was a loner. Oh, not the kind without friends or the likely candidate for rape, but merely a man, a different dying breed of man, who chose to spend his time in the wilderness and to draw sweet tasting life from it. It was his wisdom gleaned from this special way of life that endeared him to three younger boys that unforgettable summer.

"Wow, look at that. It's beautiful," whispered Mark in awe. We had just had our first look at Alford Lake. We, Mark, Charlie, and I, had come to Alford Lake for a weekend retreat to camp and fish, and on my part at least, just to take off a weekend to try to recall the whole year. Our leader was Paul Len.

He walked along the beach watching the sunset as we argued over responsibilities. "Ya'll set up the tent while I build the fire," said Charlie.

"Naw, I'll build the fire and you do the cooking," retorted Mark.

Well, I had to set up the tent while the other two fussed with the fire, but it was all right for I had a chance to think about the man now standing stiffly at the end of the pier as the sun slipped below the trees. His only words since we had arrived had been, "It's too late to do any fishing today, but we'll get an early start mañana," and then he left to be alone.

When he rejoined us at our hillside encampment in the pines, we had a fire to be proud of. He said nothing, however, but moved down to a little plateau below our tent and proceeded to build a small fire of his own. Not perturbed in the least by his actions, we followed and entreated him to join us at the tent site. His only reply was, "A man's a fool that builds a large fire," and then with a twinkle in his eye he added, "You'll understand in the morning why I'm sleeping down here." Sheepishly we doused our inferno and joined him to hear what else this man of few words might offer. After a simple supper of beans and bacon, he brought out his guitar and began to sing the words of Dan Fogelberg, and as I began to realize, Paul Len's words. As we four huddled next to the small fire to ward off the cool night breeze blowing in from the lake, he sang tales of love and of love lost.



Warmed by the meal and the fire and lulled by his music, we soon made our way back up the hill to crawl into our sleeping bags. As we retired into the tent, we could see him spreading a single blanket next to the fire. Snug in my bag, I could hear him softly singing a final song to himself and I could picture him staring out at the silent water as his fire flickered out. I went to sleep pondering the mystery behind this man's lifestyle.

The smell of frying fish awakened me as I found myself and my friends halfway down the hill where we had rolled as we slept. I chuckled to myself as I remembered his words of the previous night. Undaunted, we collected our fishing tackle and scrambled down the remainder of the hill in the faint pre-dawn light to find the results of some successful night fishing — on Paul Len's part — sizzling in a skillet. We gathered around the small hardwood fire in the cool morning air and ate our breakfast in silence. The fog was just lifting as we finished and we were on the water well before sunrise. As Paul Len deftly sculled the small boat out of dock, we were geared up for an exciting day of fishing.

Four hours of hard fishing later and a stringer full of bass, we pulled back into the landing for a well deserved feast of prime steak with all the trimmings. After gorging ourselves, we spread out on a grassy knoll overlooking the water to rest and get some sun. We recounted the morning's events for a while; then Mark and Charlie went for a swim leaving me with an opportunity to retrace some of the recent happenings by myself. As I remembered Paul Len's skillful maneuvering of the boat and his fishing prowess, my thoughts again turned to the mystery shrouding this man about whom, I had begun to realize, I really knew very little. He was sleeping a few feet away with his hat pulled down over his eyes.

"What are you thinking about," came a soft question which shattered the silence and embarrassed me because I realized that he had not been asleep, but had been studying me intently as I him. So taken aback was I, that for a moment I was unable to speak. When he then, smiling, produced a can of snuff, I returned the smile because I knew we had found a common ground. I moved closer to him and we took our after dinner dips and leaned back contentedly against a tree. For awhile neither of us spoke.

Then I broke the silence by simply asking, "Why?"

As if he could read my intent he responded with an equally simple answer, "A girl." He then, in a rare show of talkativeness and emotion, proceeded to tell of his first trip to Alford Lake when he too was sixteen. He had gone with his church group on a weekend youth retreat, much like our trip, but he had had a special purpose: a special girl. That weekend he had tried to gain, as he thought, the most important thing in the world, but it did not work out and he lost her. As a result he changed and withdrew into his own world, compelled each year to return to the scene which had robbed him of his happiness yet afforded him his only good memories of love gone by. Suddenly the pieces fell into place for me, and I understood him.

As he walked the beach at sunset, he must have felt what Dan Fogelberg felt when he wrote the lines, "I left a trail of footprints deep in the snow. I swore one day I would retrace them, but when I turned around I found that

the wind had erased them, now I'll never replace them." Paul Len had escaped into Fogelberg's music because he had experienced the same things. Fogelberg's Hickory Grove was Paul Len's Alford Lake; it was a dream that he could stay with.

Mark and Charlie went fishing again that afternoon, but I chose to remain with Paul Len discussing life and love. We talked of things such as loving when you can, crying when you have to, but most of all, being who you must.

Our last night at Alford Lake as we sat around the fire, Paul Len opened up to all of us. He told us his simple philosophy of life, "I am who I am; I am one with whoever or whatever will be one with me. I am one with the woods because they will be one with anybody." He also told us what Alford Lake meant to him and concluded by saying, "Alford Lake is more than a place; it's a way of life." That night we moved our sleeping bags down next to Paul Len and slept under the stars because we too were now one with him.

When Sunday morning came Mark, Charlie, and I rose early because we had planned a sunrise devotional before we left. When we woke, however, Paul Len was already gone. As we went down to the beach we saw him walking around the lake as I am sure he and his girl must have done many years before and as he had done many times since. He paused briefly on a green hill on the other side and looked back and then continued his endless trek through the past. When he got back he walked out to the end of the pier just as the sun was topping the trees. He stood there for a long time and then threw a solitary rock into the glassy lake. He continued standing there until the ripples subsided; then he turned and walked slowly back to the camp. We packed and rode home in silence.

I have not seen Paul Len since; maybe he still goes back or maybe he realized it was over when he threw the rock into the water. I don't know. But I do know I'll go back.

**Hugh Bush**  
**Third Place Short Story**



## An Analysis Of William Faulkner's "A Rose For Emily"

William Faulkner's short story, "A Rose for Emily," concerns Emily's resistance to the changing world around her. She is unable to give up the Grierson family's position of honor in the town, a town which is dedicated to growth and progress, rather than tradition. After her father's death, which Emily is unable to accept, she retreats more deeply into the house and into the past. In her final attempt to enter into modern society, she falls in love with Homer Barron, a man who lives only for the present. Emily, again threatened with desertion and disgrace, makes her final retreat into the past, taking Homer with her. From this time on, she permits no one to penetrate her shelter in the past, and she refuses to venture into the changing world around her. Death's grip on Emily finally blends the horrors of the past with the present. The style, the character development, and the setting used by Faulkner prepare the reader for the shocking and unforgettable climax.

The style used by Faulkner creates an atmosphere of suspense and mystery. His vivid descriptions of the house and Emily leave the reader with a feeling of foreboding. Faulkner successfully stimulates the various senses of the reader by his excellent choice of descriptive terms, "Miss Emily's house, lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay — an eyesore among eyesores." The smells he describes are brought to life — "It smelled of dust and disuse — a close, dank smell." Emily appears to be dead while still alive in one description of her — "She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue." In contrast, the laughing, good-humored Homer Barron driving Emily in his yellow-wheeled buggy makes the "past" appear even colder and more eerie.

Faulkner's development of the minor as well as the major characters in the story blends well with his style. As a child standing next to her father, Emily appears frail and timid. In contrast, he appears to be a strong, cold, overbearing man. After his death, Emily takes on many of his qualities; her voice sounds cold and dry to her visitors; she is able to maintain piercing eye-to-eye contact with her adversaries, and she openly and successfully defies the laws and the lawmakers concerning her taxes. The mention of her great-aunt's insanity foretells that which lies ahead for Emily. As she grows older, she appears fat and lifeless — "a fallen monument" — to the town. Faulkner vividly compares the older generation with the younger members of the town — "three gray-beards and a member of the rising generation." In doing so, he again places great emphasis on the differences of the past and present. The characterization of Homer Barron as an outgoing Yankee in a southern region further adds to the conflict between tradition and the modern, growing town — the past opposed to the present.

The characters and, indeed, the theme of Faulkner's short story could be portrayed in no better setting than a town in the Old South, steeped in history and tradition. Noble families of the South, such as the Grierson



family, had to surrender their power and grandiose style of living. The South's struggle that exists between the past and present is similar to the struggle Emily faces. The southern town Emily lives in chooses to move with the present, while Emily slips further and further into the past, ever widening the gap between herself and her fellowman. The townspeople mourn for Emily at her funeral out of respect. But in reality, she had stopped living many years earlier at the time of Homer's death when she chose to live with and love the decaying body of her dead lover.

Throughout, Faulkner emphasizes the struggle between the past and the present. Emily's complete withdrawal into the past represents insanity. Homer's total disregard for the past makes him a shallow, weakly developed individual. A balance must be achieved between the past and the present. Heritage is vitally important, but growth and advancement are necessary to all mankind. Neither Homer nor Emily was able to compromise personal beliefs or standards; therefore, both lost their chance at happiness.

**Gloria Stone**  
**First Place Formal Essay**

## *Morning Comes Quietly*

Morning comes quietly  
and quickly  
out of nowhere  
it rises into day.

Morning is so fresh  
so full of life  
and then the dew dries  
and it's day once more.

The day wears on  
and evening creeps in.  
The evening with the  
sounds and sights of life.

The evening wears on  
into night.  
Night with its quietness  
and gentleness.

Morning comes quietly  
and quickly  
once more.

**Margaret Fleming  
Third Place Poetry**

## The Will

The old, beat-up brown pickup lurched to a sudden stop in front of the delapidated, old shack Haroldine Lewis called home. His brown, weather beaten face seemed ageless as Haroldine stepped up the creaky, old steps, "Maw, you home?" called Haroldine in a loud, deep voice, "I hope you got me a good, hot supper fixed."

"Yeah, Paw, I'm in the kitchen fixin' turnip greens for supper. How did your trash pickup go? Did you finish today or will you have to finish up tomorrow?" Maybelle knew the answer to her question even before she asked it.

Haroldine smiled to himself and then replied, "Yeah, honey, I finished up today and managed to gather about a dozen drink bottles from the trash. Now, ain't you proud of me!"

Maybelle smoothed her apron and then picked up the steaming dish of turnip greens and took them through the door to the dining room. "Paw," she said, "Folks wonder why you pick up all the trash in town when you have more money than anybody. Just for once, why don't you spend a little money on yourself and quit worryin' about them, old cows you got runnin' wild outside of town on that two thousand acres Grandpa Lewis left you."

Haroldine dipped a spoonful of turnip greens and looked into Maybelle's faded, blue eyes. "Bah," he said, "how many dadburn times have I got to tell you that my money doesn't mean anything to me. I've been savin' that money all my life so that I'll have it to fall back on, should I get sick or something!"

Maybelle placed her fork on the table and shook her finger at the grinning man. "Paw, that freeloadin' nephew of yours, Tom Lewis, is goin' to spend your money if he ever gets his hands on it. All your workin' and slavin' will go up in smoke, and for what? Nothin' that's what! Go ahead and laugh, but I'll have the last laugh."

"Maw," he said, "I ain't plannin' to die in the first place. In the second place, I have an appointment to see Lawyer Davis in the mornin'. I want Tom and you to go with me so that we can discuss an important change that I've made in the will. Lawyer Davis and I will tell you more about it, tomorrow. Now, I had better go feed the cattle before it gets dark."

Haroldine and Maybelle then both got up from the table and left the room. Maybelle went back into the kitchen to clean up, and Haroldine went out to his old pickup and crawled inside the rusty cab and sat down on the torn, seat covers.

Haroldine hummed to himself as he bounced out of town along the rough, gravel road leading out to his land. He thought about that fine lady of his. She always seemed to put his welfare above her own. He had loved her ever since he had seen her at the general store buying groceries for her sick aunt. He had politely introduced himself and told her he hoped to see her again. See her again he did. Their relationship blossomed like a ruby, red rose under the warm, summer sun. They had shared their lives even though they never



were able to have children of their own. The Great Depression had been extremely hard but they had struggled through with only the aid of their own hands. Maybelle had worked part time cleaning the homes of the rich merchants in town. Haroldine had chopped and picked cotton until his arms had felt as if they wanted to fall off. Maybelle never complained when there wasn't enough money for a new coat or new shoes. She had patched her old clothing and made do as best she could. Haroldine had shucked old man Warner's corn until he had wished he would never see another ear of corn. Haroldine never wanted to relive this period in his life.

Haroldine snapped back to the present as he saw the cattle gap at the entrance to his land. He hoped that he could finish his chores before darkness set in.

The old pickup lurched to a sudden stop in the front pasture of his land. He stepped out of his truck and jumped to the ground. Haroldine had failed to notice a movement in front of him or the rattlesnake's rattle of warning. The snake jumped forward and sank its fangs into his ankle. Haroldine let out a horrified scream as the snake crawled under a prickly, blackberry bush.

"Maybelle, sweet Maybelle, why didn't I listen to you!" Haroldine then stumbled to the ground hitting his head on a jagged rock near the truck. He lay there on the ground unconscious for a long time.

In the warm kitchen, Maybelle glanced out the window and noticed that darkness had descended upon the land. Maybelle was becoming anxious and wondered what was keeping Haroldine.

"Paw," she said to herself, "you may be dumb but I still love you. Now where could that old coot be?"

Maybelle was startled when the telephone rang in the living room. She rushed to the telephone and picked up the receiver. "Haroldine," she asked quickly, "is that you?"

"No, it's Dr. Latimer at the hospital. Maybelle, Haroldine has been hurt," the man replied. The doctor seemed to pause for a second before he went on.

Maybelle's hands trembled as she heard herself calmly ask what happened.

"Well, he was bitten by a rattler and took a nasty fall which knocked him unconscious. I'm sorry, Maybelle. Maybe you had best come to the hospital to see for yourself."

Maybelle put down the receiver and rushed to the garage and got into her beat-up, green Chevy. She rushed to the hospital at a furious pace without even pausing for a traffic light.

As soon as she entered the hospital parking lot, she parked her Chevy in a parking place and got out of her car. She burst through the swinging doors without even pausing to catch her breath.

In the hospital lobby, Tom Lewis and his beautiful wife Pricilla Lewis sat quietly contemplating what they would buy with Haroldine's money. Tom wanted to buy a new Lincoln Continental and a speed boat. He was also going to use some of the money to buy a white columned mansion that was

for sale on the other side of town. Pricilla wanted the money so that she could buy herself a diamond ring and a mink coat. The rest of the money would be put into a bank so that it could draw interest. Tom Lewis was a tall, athletic man about thirty with a blond crewcut and piercing, black eyes that seemed to snap at his wife as he spoke. He had on a pair of outdated penny loafers and high water pants that seemed to fit his character.

His wife appeared to be daydreaming as she sat quietly in her chair. Pricilla's teased, bleached hair hinted that she was a beautician. The crisp, pink uniform confirmed this as fact.

"Maybe Aunt Maybelle will be here soon, so that we can leave," Pricilla complained. "This damned hospital is keeping me from the beauty shop. I want Pricilla's Place to be the greatest beauty shop in the state with me the queen of it all."

"Would you shut up and stop your whining!" Tom shouted in a loud voice. "That damned gossip house can survive for a couple of hours without your big mouth. You're the Rona Barrett of the town as it is!" Pricilla's eyes flashed daggers, but Maybelle had arrived before she could give a sharp retort.

Maybelle rushed into the lobby and demanded to see Haroldine. Tom slowly replied, "He's dead, Aunt Maybelle, I'm sorry. By the way when are the lawyers going to read Uncle Haroldine's will. I hope he provided generously for his mourning survivors."

Maybelle's blue eyes turned into blazing, blue gems that seemed to scorch into Tom's very soul. "Tom, you have got to be the lowest person in the world," she calmly stated in a flat voice. "How dare you ask me that question when your gentle, old uncle isn't even cold yet, and you are already after his money. Haroldine may have changed that damned will so that you and your trollop will not get one red cent," Maybelle said in a low voice.

Tom and Pricilla's faces seemed to fall in stunned shock. They slowly got up and walked across the sterile, white lobby. Suddenly Tom turned around and looked at Maybelle with his beady, black eyes. "You'll see my lawyer after the funeral and we will see who gets Uncle Haroldine's money!" he threatened in a loud, angry voice. He and Pricilla then stormed out the door cursing each other and Maybelle.

Maybelle walked slowly down the long, white hall. She thought that she should cry, but her misery was just too deep for crying. She stopped and looked through a small window at the neat, rose bushes that grew in the hospital's rose garden. Maybelle knew that life would go on without Haroldine. She had to continue her life, but she knew that her troubles had only just begun.

**Cecil Pollan**  
**First Place Short Story**

## *My Candle*

Tonight the lights went out.

A tree is on the line,

.Or something.

I sit in the dark and watch the

Flicker flutter sputter of the candles and  
the rain washes my roof.

Be silent, my house. Let none of those  
man-noises be heard and disturb my quiet.

Listen to the silence of rainfall, the  
Drip, plop, plip, drop as it falls  
to merge with the millions that  
Have fallen and will fall in the darkness.

And in the silence of my un-electric room,  
My thoughts run to you like the  
Rain runs down my window-pane.

And I wish for your nearness  
To share my loneliness and the  
flicker flutter sputter of my candle,  
My heart.

Sharon Smith  
Second Place Poetry



## Perfect Revenge In "The Cask Of Amontillado"

"The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as best I could, but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge."

"The Cask of Amontillado" written by Edgar Allen Poe in 1846 starts with these words and expands the method of revenge throughout the story. Through observations on the writer's style and his use of structure, symbolism, irony, and theme, it can be shown that "The Cask of Amontillado" is an example of perfect revenge.

Most of Edgar Allen Poe's work may be regarded as expressionism of which "The Cask of Amontillado" is a prime example. Expressionism implies a partial distortion, and "The Cask of Amontillado" is Poe's most effective expressionist horror story. In Poe's writing, there is no consistency in any of his treatments of the human will and behavior; no two characters are the same. His psychology of human behavior is his conviction that life is a constant inner struggle between mind and body. Poe's protagonists are compulsively driven toward death to unite in afterlife the facilities of body and mind or mind and soul which in life had been constantly at war. It is this attitude toward death as the realization of one's total self and the completion of the life cycle that is about the only thing the Poe protagonists have in common.

In light of this, Poe returns again and again to subjects which can not be fully understood. Like other writers of his time, he has a mythic imagination; for example, he is most preoccupied with the past when it is an eerie one. Poe's protagonist of "The Cask of Amontillado" Montressor typifies his mastery of cruelty. He depicts Montressor gloating over the details of the suffering of his victim Fortunato; then, Montressor exults when Fortunato regains his sobriety and is able to fully realize the horror of the situation. He also teases the reader with the thought that he may be having misgivings for his deed by saying, "My heart grew sick. . .," only to shatter this illusion by finishing the sentence with, ". . . on account of the dampness in the catacombs."

Because of his seemingly random and rambling sadistic thoughts, many critics underestimate Poe to be a writer of motiveless evil. However, the details of horror are not simply mere sadism but part of the overall ironic revenge, and these details lend to a more coherent tale than many realize.

There is, though, a danger of reading too much or too little into the styles of different authors, particularly, Poe. He, like his fellow writers, can sense when he has produced something with a ghostly quality, something not fully understood. Although a critic is justified in psychologically analyzing Poe's work especially, it must be remembered that Poe is in the business to promote the subjects he writes about. He hopes to manipulate his audiences as the professional pianist will play the piano until he gets the desired response. More than likely, he likes the feel of "The Cask of Amontillado"

and knows it will sell, so he "plays it by ear" and nothing more.

In review of Poe's style, these points stand out: Poe, like his contemporaries, exploits horror in his stories because it is a product that will sell in the magazines of his time; Poe is in control of his writing, not vice-versa; and though not all of Poe's stories are intense in tone, even those showing the greatest intensity such as "The Cask of Amontillado" reveal an artistic ability and controlled structure.

The opening of the story and the use of the narrator illustrates this structure. The story opens well into the plot; there is no history of the happenings or background. The narrator does not reveal his mind so it is not known why Montressor hates Fortunato, only that he has a plan for revenge and he reveals it only as the story progresses. The narrator also has the power of leaving his mind or intellectual being and transforming into his physical or animal self. He can then return to his intellectual being without any harm to his total self as if he can separate the physical state from the mental state and then restore the two at will. This point and the fact that he is the master of his circumstances is of utmost importance in considering his method of perfect revenge.

Coupled with the structure is the use of irony and symbolism in the story to produce the overall effect. A startling irony is the contrast between the carnival outside and the journey into the depths of the catacombs. Outside is the gait and revelry of the carnival with bright lights, gaudy costumes, and plenty to drink. Inside the catacombs it is dark, cold, damp, and the walls are encrusted with nitre and lined with human bones.

Also worth noting is the irony of Fortunato's name and his attire for the carnival. Fortunato is certainly not fortunate as his name suggests, and he is dressed fittingly as a fool, complete to the jingling bells of merriment on his cap. Montressor's dress of black cape and mask is equally symbolic of his role as the villain.

Another irony and perhaps the most important is the emergence of Montressor's trowel which is the symbol of masonic brotherhood and also the instrument of the portending death. Aside from the obvious implication, it also gives coherence to many of Montressor's sarcastic remarks by suggesting a motive.

This apparent motive for Montressor's deed comes to light halfway in their journey into the catacombs when Fortunato makes a gesture pertaining to his being a mason. When the reader finds out that Fortunato is a mason, he also discovers that Montressor is not because Montressor does not understand the gesture.

The story gives much evidence that Montressor is a Catholic which provides a motive based on Catholic-Masonic opposition. One example to show that Montressor is Catholic is his family coat of arms which shows a foot crushing a serpent whose fangs are imbedded in the heel. This depicts the Church triumphing over the forces of evil. Also, "The Cask of Amontillado" is set at carnival time which is a Catholic season, and many of the things Montressor says relate either to the Church and Catholicism or are sarcastic remarks directed toward masons. With this evidence in mind it

becomes clear that the story is a moral revenge based on Mason-Catholic conflict.

As Montressor contemplates perfect revenge, he says, "I must not only punish but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong." At the beginning of the story, Montressor plays on Fortunato's weaknesses. First he appeals to Fortunato's connoisseurship of wines by telling Fortunato that he has purchased a cask of Amontillado wine and he has doubts to its authenticity, thereby creating a desire in Fortunato to taste the wine. Then Montressor strings him along by pretending to get a rival named Luchesi to taste the wine, thus arousing Fortunato's jealousy of a fellow connoisseur. This, added to Fortunato's indifference to the conditions in the catacombs leads them down into the subterranean vaults. It is seen here that Montressor, a connoisseur of the ironic, has a premeditated plan. First, he arranges for the servants to be away for the holidays; then he sweeps the caves clear of the old bones; and he carries an ominous trowel beneath his cape. Suddenly Montressor reveals his plan and revenge is complete.

Montressor then meets the two criteria for perfect revenge. He fulfills the first when he is not caught. Montressor succeeds in this where other Poe protagonists fail because he can descend from one faculty to another and then return without detection from society. Montressor fulfills the second requirement when Fortunato is sober enough to see Montressor's intent and begs, "For the love of God, Montressor." When Montressor replies, "Yes; for the love of God," Fortunato understands the reason for revenge and Montressor calmly places the last brick into place. The final line, "Rest in peace," spoken by Montressor is an appropriate ironic ending to this ironic story.

(See illustration  
on page 35.)

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Hugh Bush  
Second Place Formal Essay



## *The Smile of A Dreamer*

His sparkling red hair and cheerful smile seem to set him apart from everyone else. Most things change with the times, but not these two. My brother Bo's red hair and his cheerful smile are two things that never change.

Although the things he smiles about now are different from the things he smiled about when he was younger, it is still the same old smile. When Bo was younger his face would light up over small things like a puppy, a BB gun, a good snowcone, or just playing in the rain. I remember when we were younger Mama would take us to town with her and tell us if we were good she would buy us a snowcone. Bo would get so excited because he loves snowcones and would do anything to get one. He would always ask for a cherry snowcone because he said he wanted his stomach to be red just like his hair. But now that Bo is older, bad cars, fast women, and disco music put a smile on his face. He has a blue Duster jacked up in the back and fog lights on the front. According to Bo, that is the "baddest" car around. "It's the U.S. Flag" they yell when he rides by. They call him this because of his red hair, white teeth, and blue car.

All the smiles I've ever seen him put on his face were never as great as when he sees the pitch of a ball or hears the swing of a bat. Yes, baseball is one of the most important things in his life. Bo has always been a baseball fan more than a ladies man, and he smiles the most when he is watching a baseball game. I remember how he used to watch the Cincinnati Reds on T.V., and he could tell you the name of every player on the team, the position they played, and their batting average. He had always dreamed of becoming a professional baseball player himself, but he never realized his dream could come true until one Christmas early in his life.

That Christmas morning Santa left him not only a baseball but a glove and a bat to go along with it. He was full of laughter and smiles that morning as he gazed at his bat and ball. His red hair sparkled brighter than the lights on the tree while he was trying on his new baseball glove. Bo really had something to smile about now because he felt as if his dream might someday come true. Even at the young age of six Bo knew that baseball was one thing that really made him happy.

The following summer Mama signed Bo up to play B-Minor baseball. Bo was so small and so skinny that Grandpa brought Bo a custom made ball suit so it wouldn't fall off him. He played short stop and all you could see under those lights were red hair and a big smile. After every game Bo and one of his friends would go out on the field and pretend they were famous ball players. Bo would pitch and his friend would catch. Bo's coach began to watch them without anyone, including Bo, knowing about it. Then one night before a game the coach handed Bo the ball and told him to get out there and put the heat of that red hair behind the ball. I remember how shocked everyone was when that skinny little red haired boy, with an excited but scared smile on his face, walked out on the mound ready to pitch his first ballgame.

From then on as Bo got older, he advanced to bigger and more challenging leagues. He moved on to Little League, then to Pony League, and on to Senior League. I remember how funny it was when the umpire told my mother that he was going to start cutting the balls in half if Bo didn't quit hitting so many of them over the fence.

While getting older his smile grew bigger, his hair grew brighter, and his love for baseball grew enormously. When Bo played Senior League the younger boys would ask him questions like "How did you ever learn to throw a ball like that?" and "Do you think I'll ever be as good as you?" When you see a red haired person you think of someone with no patience at all, but not Bo; he would stand there for hours and talk to the little boys and tell them how much work it took but how it was worth it now. Then he would smile as the little boys would walk away saying, "I want to be just like Bo when I grow up."

Now Bo pitches for Mississippi College where he plans to be a coach himself, but he still has that wonderful dream of one day becoming a professional baseball player. His baseball coach quit coaching last year to become a scout for the Philadelphia Phillies. So who knows, maybe one day, sooner than I thought, I will watch a tall, slim, young man with sparkling red hair and a satisfied smile walk out on the mound at a professional baseball stadium ready to pitch his first pro game with the name Bo Jordan.

**Sudie Jordan**  
**First Place Informal Essay**



## Ilsa Devereaux

Ilsa Devereaux was one of our town's most colorful characters, that is, until she met with an untimely death some time ago. The community was shocked and a cloud of sadness engulfed the town at news of her death.

As to the matter of her demise, the same unspoken question was on everyone's lips. Why! Why did she have to go like that? She had belonged to the town. It was unthinkable that we would no longer see her familiar figure ambling along the streets wagging an old worn out shopping bag. Ilsa's passing to her reward had left a void.

Her body was laid to rest in the Catholic cemetery just a few short blocks from the middle of town. She had lived more than the three score and ten years as mentioned in the Good Book. It was the tragic ending of those years that was uppermost on the minds of the people. Fate had been unkind to Ilsa.

Ilsa had not always been the town character. She only became one with the passing of time. The change had been gradual, and it prompted much speculation after her death. Miss Mary Tutwiler remembered when she was the belle of the town — as one early admirer put it, "She was cute as a bed of speckled puppies." To the younger generation, she was just a weird old lady but one who, nonetheless, held a certain fascination for them.

Ilsa had been born in New Orleans and came from a distinguished family. Her grandmother Devereaux was one of the South's first female publisher-editors. Her father was telegraph operator of *The Picayune* in New Orleans. When Ilsa was five years of age, an epidemic of malaria gripped the city, and her parents sent her to Brooksville, a small town in south Mississippi, to stay with her Aunt Nora until the fever subsided.

Ellie Henderson, a childhood friend, recalls, "Miss Nora owned the house next door to ours. She was a plump woman in her early forties with dark hair and olive complexion. Miss Nora had never married and my mother always said it was a pity that a woman of her looks and refinement preferred to remain an old maid school teacher.

"I remember the day Miss Nora came over and told my mother that she was expecting her little niece from New Orleans to spend a few weeks and she hoped that Ilsa and I would become good friends. I eagerly looked forward to Ilsa's arrival since we were of the same age and I thought it would be nice to have a playmate living next door.

"When Miss Nora brought Ilsa over to make my acquaintance, I liked her immediately. She had on a blue dress trimmed in white lace. Her eyes were as blue as her dress and her head was covered with golden ringlets. She spoke with a decided French accent and I was intrigued. I suppose the reason I remember our meeting so vividly was because she was nothing like I had pictured. I was expecting her to be dark like her Aunt Nora.

"Ilsa and I became good friends and we spent all of our waking hours together with the exception of Sundays since Miss Nora was Catholic and my family was Protestant. We had become close and I dreaded to see her return home."

As it turned out, Ilsa did not return to her home in New Orleans. The few



weeks she had come to spend in Brooksville stretched into years, as Miss Nora received a telegram from New Orleans stating that both of Ilsa's parents had succumbed to the fever. Since no one was allowed to enter or leave the city for fear of contracting or spreading the disease, Miss Nora and Ilsa were unable to attend the funeral. A memorial service was held instead.

Miss Nora brought her niece up in the true southern tradition and in a manner befitting most girls born of well-to-do families. She was exceptionally bright and was always at the head of her class. Ilsa excelled in everything she did.

Ollie Notsinger, in recalling her school days with Ilsa, said, "It never occurred to any of us to be jealous of Ilsa. We always treated her special because she was an orphan. In the first place it would have been very unkind, even if she had been a snotty-nosed brat, which she wasn't. In the second place, Brother West, our pastor, occasionally sermonized on widows and orphans — how they should be ministered unto. If any of us had mistreated her, we would have been inviting the wrath of God."

And the wrath of God is what some folks thought should come to the one or ones who were responsible for Ilsa's death.

Miss Nora and Ilsa usually spent their summers in New Orleans visiting their kin and shopping. Ilsa always dressed better than the majority of the children her age. Most mothers went down to McAdams Mercantile Store and bought yards and yards of gingham and calico which Miss Nellie, the town's seamstress, made into school dresses. When it came to plain or fancy sewing, no one could hold a candle to Miss Nellie. She was the town's best and did a thriving business on her sewing machine.

Nan Pinson, who had lived across the street from Ilsa, recalled their last year of high school and their college days. "Ilsa was the class valedictorian which everyone expected. She no longer retained her French accent but still hadn't acquired the pronounced Southern drawl spoken by Brooksville residents. I remember how proud Miss Nora was at our graduation and the many compliments she received on the fine job she had done in bringing up her niece.

"That fall, Ilsa and Ellie and I enrolled at Whitworth College, a local private school for girls. We were the only girls in our graduating class to attend college. We were fortunate that we were able to obtain our degrees without having to leave home. Of course at that time college educations were not considered important for girls. Most of our classmates were girls from surrounding states."

Ilsa continued to excell in her studies and was graduated summa cum laude. It was Miss Nora's wish that Ilsa attend graduate school. She was twenty-one at the time and had received part of her inheritance from her father's estate.

At the end of June, she and Miss Nora left for New York City to enroll Ilsa at Columbia University for the fall term. A New York bank account was opened in Ilsa's name. A few of Miss Nora's friends questioned her judgement. They thought it a pity for Ilsa to go so far away from home. Still,

they reasoned Ilsa was an intellectual and an orphan and Miss Nora was doing what she thought best.

Zack Turner, who owned the corner grocery where Miss Nora traded, had questioned her also. "What's this I hear about you letting our little Ilsa go off to the big city?"

"Now, Zack, you know at my age, I won't always be around to see after her. I think it will be good for her to learn how to stand on her own two feet."

"Naw, she'll just hop up and get married and all that education will just go down the drain."

"You could be right, Zack, but I feel it my duty to fulfill my obligations to the best of my ability."

Zack Turner, who was now eighty-one years of age, had outlived both Miss Nora and Ilsa and still declares that Miss Nora did a foolish thing.

"It wasn't my place to argue with her. After all her background was different to most Brooksville residents and in her heart I suppose she thought she was doing the right thing. Still I think when she sent Ilsa to New York, it became the turning point. Although Ilsa had been raised in Brooksville, she was never really one of us. I think deep down Ilsa sensed it. She was more like a plant that had been uprooted and planted in alien soil."

In the fall Miss Nora's teaching duties prevented her from accompanying Ilsa to New York. On the day she was to leave, Nan went with Miss Nora and Ilsa to the depot. Nan said, "It was the custom then for the townsfolk to congregate at the depot at train time to see who was getting on and off. The account was later reported in the local paper — but there was always an air of excitement about being there."

"Since it was considered highly improper for a young lady to travel alone, it was apparent from the expression on Miss Nora's face that she was concerned. I remember her cautioning Ilsa several times on how to conduct herself and not to speak to strangers."

"As the train pulled out, Miss Nora stood watching until it disappeared from sight. I waited for her discreetly inside the station as I sensed she needed those few moments alone since she was a private person and did not like to display her emotions in public."

After Ilsa went away to school, Miss Nora's friends and neighbors made a habit of dropping by to inquire about Ilsa — mostly through sympathy but partly out of curiosity. Everyone knew that Miss Nora must be lonely and felt sorry for her.

At first Ilsa wrote to her aunt faithfully. Miss Nora always stopped off at the post office on her way home. It was easy to tell when she received a letter from Ilsa because she would open it on the spot.

Winter turned into spring and news of Ilsa slowed to a trickle. When Miss Nora was questioned, she always had a ready reply, "Ilsa is quite busy with her studies." Her explanation was readily accepted by most; however, a few felt that wasn't the real reason, but hesitated to press her.

The interesting tidbits that had been appearing in the "News About Town" column had all but disappeared. Miss Nora and Ilsa were about the

only residents in town who were newsworthy. They were much more interesting than reading about Mrs. Jarvis's cow being hit by a car. Since old Doc Andrews was the only person in town to own a car, it was easy to guess who hit the cow, although no name was mentioned.

Two years passed before Ilsa returned to Brooksville. The day she stepped off the train, a poised and sophisticated young lady, one of the locals exclaimed, "I swun, I thought I had seed an angel. I ain't never seen nuthin' so purty."

Upon Ilsa's return to Brooksville, she seemed to settle down to small town life. Everyone was happy that little Ilsa was home again. After renewing friendships with her former classmates, Ilsa went to work in the town's leading bank. She was the first female in Brooksville to work in what was considered a male dominated organization. She was the most popular girl in town and was widely imitated by most of the young ladies. Still, her romantic life suffered because she was held in awe by the town's eligible young men. None felt he could measure up to Ilsa.

Miss Ellie said of this period in Ilsa's life, "For the first time I felt sorry for Ilsa. Nan and I wondered if she would ever find a young man worthy of her. Nan was courting Frank Pinson at the time and I had already decided to devote my life to teaching."

The following winter, during a dance at the Elks Club, Ilsa met a suitor who was not intimidated by her intelligence. Ed McInnis had invited a friend, Dan McDougal, to visit him in Brooksville. McDougal, called Mac for short, was a pitcher for the Cotton States League, the South's only professional baseball team. He was a lanky red head with an engaging smile. Upon meeting Ilsa, he was captivated by her and she was impressed with his shy, easy going manner. During his stay in Brooksville, Mac and Ilsa became inseparable. When Mac left for spring training they wrote each other daily. At the end of the season the league disbanded. Most of the players were absorbed into the Northern leagues but Mac chose to return to Brooksville and to Ilsa. One of the local business men who was a sports enthusiast took Mac on as a protegee. The town welcomed him with open arms.

Ilsa and Mac were married in the Catholic church. It was the biggest wedding that Brooksville had ever seen. Ilsa's cousins came up from New Orleans and Mac's former team mates were in attendance. At the reception someone poured alcohol in the punch bowl. The Maben sisters declared it was the best they ever tasted and asked Miss Nora for the recipe.

The following year Mac and Ilsa became the parents of a son. He had his father's red hair and they called him Little Mac. Outwardly, the marriage seemed idyllic but after a few months Ilsa took Little Mac and moved out into an apartment. The town was shocked and there was much speculation. Since neither would discuss it with anyone, it became a matter of conjecture. As in most small towns there was a lot of tongue-wagging. Whatever the reason it was the talk of the town for months to come.

After the separation Ilsa went back to work. Big Mac continued to stay



in Brooksville. He never missed a day visiting his son. The townspeople were touched by his devotion.

By the time Little Mac entered high school he was sports reporter for the school paper. His talent did not go unnoticed as Mr. Jackson took Mac on at the local paper. He had inherited his love for sports from his father and his intelligence from his mother.

It wasn't until Little Mac went away to college to major in journalism that Ilsa began to act peculiar. It was first noticed by her co-workers; but at the time they didn't place too much emphasis on her actions.

As Ilsa's peculiarities became more pronounced, her friends were at a loss to explain her actions. Air conditioning had come to Brooksville and Ilsa refused to work if the bank installed it. Her reasons were that it lowered the body temperature and induced illness. On another occasion she told Miss Ellie that she had decided to go without her undergarments as it was unhealthy when the body couldn't breathe. Miss Ellie said she was flabbergasted and told Nan Pinson she couldn't understand where Ilsa was getting such crazy notions. "I don't know what's come over Ilsa."

Upon graduating from college Little Mac left Mississippi for New York City to accept a position on *The New York Times*. Big Mac was filled with pride and the townspeople boasted as they had predicted that Little Mac would make it big some day.

Eventually Ilsa lost her position at the bank. Although she was considered a valued employee, they were unable to cope with her many peculiarities. With no job and her inheritance almost depleted, she began to write a column for the local paper. It was widely accepted by the town's intellectuals but they were only a small segment. Others complained saying they needed a dictionary to look up the words. Ilsa continued to write her column for the next four years before it was finally dropped. When Little Mac learned of her plight, he began sending her a monthly check from New York.

It wasn't until Miss Nora passed away, that a big change really seemed to come over Ilsa. She turned her attention to homeless dogs and filled her apartment with all the strays she could find. In order to maintain them, she made daily visits to the slaughter house to pick up bones and scraps of meat. The young people nicknamed her "the dog lady."

When the garbage man refused to pick up her garbage and the neighbors complained about the odor emanating from her apartment, she was ordered to give up her dogs or move. Unable to find another apartment that would accept them, she moved to an abandoned farm house on the outskirts of town.

Her friends begged her to give up the dogs as they considered it too dangerous to live outside of town; but Ilsa was adamant and refused to part with them.

Ilsa was a creature of habit and maintained a daily routine. After moving to the abandoned farm house, she continued to come into town and have lunch with Miss Ellie and Nan Pinson at the Rountree, Brooksville's most expensive restaurant. She afforded herself this one luxury.

Although Ilsa had become somewhat of an eccentric, she was not a recluse and still acted the part of a grand lady. Her stylish dress had changed to gaudiness, but there was still evidence that she had known better days.

On the day that Ilsa failed to show up for lunch, her friends and the management became alarmed. Thinking she might be ill, they asked the sheriff to investigate. She was found unconscious lying in a pool of blood. An ambulance was summoned and she was rushed to the hospital where she died that night. The circumstances surrounding her death remain a mystery. Since the farm house was situated on a well-travelled highway, could it have been a transient who thought she might have money? Many questions still remain unanswered. The older residents were shocked and felt a sense of sadness. The once belle of Brooksville was no more.

Ilsa's funeral was held from the same church where she had married. It was the biggest funeral Brooksville had ever seen.

Upon leaving the cemetery, Miss Ellie and Nan Pinson paused to reminisce. They had been Ilsa's closest friends. Miss Ellie said, "I always felt it was a mistake for Ilsa to come back to Brooksville after her college days in New York."

Nan agreed and replied, "Brooksville was too small for a person of Ilsa's intelligence. You would have thought Miss Nora would have recognized that fact; but since she was getting on in age, it probably escaped her."

"Ilsa's fate might have been different had she gone to New Orleans instead of returning here. As it was she stagnated here. She was never really the same."

Tears trickled down Miss Ellie's cheeks as she steadied herself on her cane and turned to take one last look at Ilsa's grave. She was remembering the little girl in the blue dress trimmed in white lace with a French accent.

**Katherine Newby**  
**Second Place Short Story**

## *A Two-Sequence Memory*

In memory of my minister and close friend, C. O. Lindsey

Today I wondered if I'd ever laugh again at the  
silly remarks of a silly sociology teacher  
regarding eating raw fish as a sociological experiment.

And Daddy sat stunned on the edge of the bed, chewing a cigarette,  
adjusting the happily colored quilt over his skinny, work-scarred knees,  
patting my quivering mama on the back and saying without emotion,  
"Yes, Tam, the preacher died."

Later I wondered how I could have roller skated the night before  
and thought life was perfect except for blistered feet and  
broken thumbnails and giggled when I got in the house without waking  
Daddy after banging into an immovable table, one sheetrock wall  
and an astonished Mama who was expecting to find only a light switch  
in the hall — not a laughing daughter.

And my crippled brother trembled as he stood near the coffin  
because Brother Lindsey was his best friend and  
Brother Lindsey just lay there offering no encouragement or  
words of wisdom or comfort and my brother trembled some more.

This morning I wondered how many times I had failed to  
stifle my yawns, giggles or stomach rumblings during sermons and I  
remembered how limply I shook his hand last Sunday in my haste to  
leave and eat a piece of ketchup splattered steak.

And today my cousin's leg quivered next to mine because  
the chapel was so crowded and everyone was pushed together  
and my cousin had loved the preacher so much and the preacher  
had loved my cousin because that was his duty and because he  
loved my cousin anyway, and I quivered and my stomach knotted  
and my eyes misted and my cousin continued to quiver.

Later this afternoon after the violinist had completed the last strains of  
"Amazing Grace" and nearly all my tears had begun to dry and  
the flowers began to crumple as did most of the church members  
and the preacher's family and the day took on more emptiness,  
I wondered again if I'd ever laugh at the nonsense of  
roommates' philosophy, men's promises and political visions.

And then I remembered that when Brother Lindsey was eight, his father  
had died and they had never gotten to play much baseball or  
fish together or tell tall tales that only a father and son do, and they  
had never viewed each other as man to man, product, by product,



flesh of flesh, bone of bone, and they probably hadn't  
shot too many marbles in the dirt, either.

And Brother Lindsey always said that the first person  
he was going to locate when he got to Heaven was going to be  
his daddy and he would tell us in his sermons how they would  
catch up on all the sorrows, joys, births, deaths, good harvests  
and bad years that his daddy had missed and  
they might shoot some marbles and play some ball, too.

Then the tears almost completely stopped as I thought of Brother Lindsey  
and his daddy walking arm in arm talking politics, the  
right way to play checkers and how to choose a good brand  
of peas to plant.

And I almost, but not quite, smiled.

**Tammy Lyon**  
**First Place Poetry**

## *The Explorer*

He had long searched for and finally found,  
A place where no man before him had been.  
He walked for miles over unspoiled ground  
Through a forest uncut since time began,

A place made for angels to rest in spare time,  
Where the trees grew so tall they almost touched the sun,  
Where songbirds sang in never-ending rhyme.

The years he'd spent searching did not seem wasted,  
For all he had left and lost he was now repaid.  
His reward he collected by strolling unhasted  
Through the closest place to heaven God had ever made.

He stopped to rest on the highest hill,  
Overlooking the kingdom of which he was now prince,  
For God was the maker, the king, and would rule until . . .

He rose and stared in disbelief, cursing aloud.  
First laughing, then crying, for the time he'd spent  
Searching for this place which now he'd found,  
To be enclosed by a rusty, barbed-wire fence!

**Andy White**  
**New Hebron Attendance Center**  
**First Place Poetry**

## Millicent

A New England snowstorm was making its presence known in the town of Blacklidge, Massachusetts. Around the house of Johnathan Trask, snow was piling in billowy heaps. The trees, already bent over with the load of ice-encased limbs, also bore snow precariously balanced between limbs.

Such was the situation as a young man carefully made his way down the slippery sidewalk to Trask's house. The old man was the only customer whose groceries had to be delivered. "As if he's too good to get 'em himself," the young man, whose name was Justin Gilbert, muttered to himself. "Look at 'im, watching me out of his winder!"

And he was; the heavy red velvet draperies were pulled back, exposing a wrinkled, wasted, elderly man, bald except for a thin monk's fringe. As Justin stomped his snow-encrusted boots on the front porch the curtain closed and a moment later the door opened slowly and a musty smell escaped from the hallway.

"Yes; what do you want, boy?" the old man demanded.

"Here are your groceries, sir," the young man said with forced politeness.

"Yes, yes! Here! And be off with you!" Without so much as a "Thank you" Trask gave him the right amount, took the bag, and slammed the door.

"You're welcome, sir!" Justin sneered and trudged back toward his father's store. Just then a sudden gust of wind dumped snow out of a huge oak in Trask's yard onto Justin. Too tired to even mumble, he simply knocked it off and started off.

Meanwhile Trask had reached into the bag and pulled out a can of tomato soup and a pound of cheddar cheese. Cutting off a small hunk, he put the cheese on the floor and made a sharp clicking noise with his tongue.

"Here Millie! Millicent!" he called. A large rat appeared from behind the stove. Twitching her whiskers inquisitively, Millicent settled to eating her supper. She was a motherly sort of rat, and Trask's favorite. He heated the soup and poured it into a cracked, chipped bowl.

"There, my little Millie; isn't that good?" he asked the rat as he sat down. Millicent did not reply, but continued nibbling.

After supper Trask sat before a small fire in his "study," as he called it. Millicent had gone to her nest, wherever it was; Trask had never bothered to find out. He felt that a lady rat should have her privacy. The heavy drapes were closed; the only light came from the feeble flames in the fireplace. Trask absent-mindedly twisted the signet ring on his finger. The ring. Andrew Roth's ring. Roth, his old partner, killed while on business in Northern Ireland by a bomb placed in his hotel. To think of it now, the event seemed made-up, melodramatic. Nevertheless, Roth had come home in a box, accompanied by a letter from the U. S. Embassy. He had had no family, and the will stipulated that Johnathan Sidney Trask was to receive the entire estate of Andrew Philip Roth, all possessions of said estate both real and private. There had been plenty of private, but not much real to speak of.

Somehow, Roth's semi-fortune had dwindled to a few thousand dollars. It was decided that he, in his growing senility, had unwittingly squandered it. Trask, therefore, accumulated ten rooms full of furniture and four thousand dollars. And the ring. It was solid gold with a blood-red ruby underneath which was etched an Old English "R." Trask sighed and noticed how well it fit his own finger. Indeed, both had been a lot alike. They had enjoyed Rogers and Hammerstein, Old Charter, and braised leg of lamb. And money. Above all else, money had been their reason for survival. Hmm; that was ironic. Roth died trying to get money. Will I? Trask wondered.

The bed was cold, icy cold. Trask blew his breath in the air and saw smoke. A sudden gust of wind rattled the windowpanes and scratched the limbs of a walnut tree against the house.

"Bad weather," Trask muttered to himself as he blew out the candle. The house had no electricity.

He awoke with a start. What was it? He could hear nothing but the fierce wind mourning outside, occasionally whistling through cracks in the window. For some reason he thought it had been a crash. The door downstairs? Had someone broken in? The dark began to close in like those moldy velvet drapes. Trask's imagination began to work on him; he began to see filmy phantasms clutch the tall bedposts, trying to shake the entire house down. A frightful pirate from old adventure books of childhood laughed a noiseless guffaw as he brandished a steely sword dripping with blood.

"Nonsense!" Trask rasped. Perhaps it was only a — what was that? A creak? Definitely; a creak from the downstairs door. Had he locked it? He couldn't remember. All he knew was that Someone or Something was in the house.

There it was again. Sneaky footsteps from a not too bright intruder. But who — or what — would be intruding in his house, especially on a night like this? True, some of the townspeople thought he had more money than he professed, but the very sight of Mr. Johnathan Sidney Trask could frighten away even the worst of urchins. But how much did people know? Was it only idle gossip? Or did someone know? No; nobody could know.

The steps were ascending the stairs. Plonk, clomp. Plonk, clomp. Heavy feet, tired feet — dead feet? Certainly not. No such thing as ghosts.

"Get up and prove it to yourself! Get up!" Trask hissed; but he couldn't get up. Terror of what it might be held him fast. The back of his head was throbbing, pumping away, as if his heart had jumped into his skull. His face was hot, so hot he imagined it as red as the drapes downstairs.

Why do I keep thinking about those drapes? And everything else, including the clock?

The grandfather clock had also been Roth's. He could hear its mechanisms now, grinding as it began to reach the hour. Why was it so loud? The quiet of the house, Trask assured himself. But he knew, and he was sure whatever That was outside his room knew. The money. His throat constricted; he twisted his gnarled hands, rubbed the stone of the signet ring as though it were an all-powerful amulet which would release him from this turmoil within his conscience. He, Johnathan Sidney Trask, was a thief!



Roth had never suspected; Roth had trusted him completely. But now he had come back, ready to right the wrong done to him . . .

The door creaked open. Oh God! Why is this horrid abomination come upon me! He has **come!**

A large figure stood silhouetted in the doorway. With all the strength he could muster, Trask sat up in bed and with a scream like that of a thousand tormented souls, he cried aloud, "ROTH!!"

"Mister — Mister Trask? I'm Joe McDonald, from next door. I'm sorry I scared you like that, but that oak tree that fell just barely missed your house. Your door was open, so I just came in to see if you were all right, and — Mr. Trask? Mr. Trask. Are you all right?"

McDonald need not have asked. Trask was lying in his bed, face up, eyes open, revealing that horror-stricken moment when he took his last breath. Trask was dead.

Downstairs, Millicent settled into her nest inside the grandfather clock. The nest was composed of a manila folder, the return address of Roth & Trask, Oil Producers, barely visible beneath a mass of green and white shredded paper. George Washington smiled benignly. It was a comfortable nest for a motherly sort of rat.

**Tammy Melissa Smith  
Brookhaven High School  
First Place Award  
Short Story**

## It Couldn't Happen To Me, But It Did

*So scare tactics don't work! But truth, reality, that ought to be worth something. I just hope I have words to tell you the way it really is.*

I'm scared now. I really am. I used to think that I was able to conquer my most difficult problems, but I know now that that's a lie. A cold, hard lie.

Can you spare five minutes, maybe ten, to listen to what I have to say?

You may be saying, "Why should I listen to you? Who in the hell are you?" Well, at this point in my life, I'm a nothing, a nobody. I'm sitting in a rehabilitation center for drug addicts with 1,499 other people, all nobody's, real losers.

That's why you need to hear me out. I've been up and down a couple more roads and alleys than you have. I know what's at the end of the so-call "rainbow," and I promise you it's not gold! You haven't made it there yet. I want to tell you what it's like at the other end of feeling good.

Pot? That's just the beginning, primary jive, Sunday school baby-stuff. Just messing around on weekends or after the game on Friday with my buddies, we would just pass a joint around until everybody figured they were high enough. That good ole feeling! You've heard of cloud nine? Well, baby, I was on cloud eighteen. I was feeling so good I couldn't see for looking, and I couldn't hear for listening.

When I was in jr. high school and high school, I was becoming the greatest majorette of all times. But those joints just sort of puffed me into a new dimension. I was getting higher and then lower, and sometimes I wasn't sure what I was.

I finally graduated from high school. I wanted to go to college, but I couldn't get up the courage. I was lucky and persuaded a really nice guy to marry me. So now I was hitched. I thought if I had a husband and a baby on the way, the drugs would just disappear from my life, but it didn't work like that. As a matter of a fact, I started using heavier and heavier stuff. I seemed to always need a little more. This went on until I had my baby. I had a baby girl, but she didn't live a day because of the stuff I fed my body. Drugs destroyed my baby and my marriage. Now I was back to nothing, but I still had to support my habit. I hated myself. Speed and downers weren't giving me enough, so I moved up to LSD. I was going pretty heavy on it until I had a bad trip. So I got off that and went to heroin. That LSD had really messed up my mind. Now I figured I had something I could handle, but I was wrong again. It handled me.

It handled me too well; it put me in this jail. No, not really jail, but this rehabilitation center. Sometime it becomes difficult to tell the difference between the two.

Another thing that is truly crazy is that I'm lonely in here. There are 1,499 people, and I'm lonely. I guess I'm lonely because I can't help thinking about my family — the baby that I killed and the husband that I lost. I hate this place. There is no love, no peace, no happiness, no respect. I don't even respect myself anymore.

The first time that I got out of here, I vowed to never go back to that stuff. I said that I would stay away from the old crowd. That's all I had to do. But no matter where I went, I ran into somebody I knew. I ran into one of my old friends that I started off with. He offered me a "stick," but I turned him down. Then I got depressed. I said, "Just this once." I was feeling down, and I wanted to get back up there. So I went looking for my friend. About a week later I found out he had O.D. I started thinking that could have been me. Then I knew I had to stop.

But I couldn't stop. I thought I would take a little at a time and cut down. I wasn't going to end up like my friend. I thought I'd play it safe and turn myself into the Rehab center for about a week. I was determined to clean myself up.

I hope you are listening to me. Please hear what I'm saying. If you could only see me vomiting, sweating enough to wring my clothes, and clawing at my mattress like some wild animal. I had to go through all of this to get this stuff out of my system. I don't want to make you sick. I just want you to know this reality. This ought to mean something to you.

I got out again and I stayed off for a little while, but I couldn't help myself. I got back on drugs little by little.

Then I wanted to do crazy things. I wanted to steal, kill. I had lost that one bit of mentality that kept me sensible. But now I'm back in the center. And that's good. It gives me time to think and not always act. I sit here thinking of how I could make things up to my ex-husband and my family; and I wish I could make it up to my baby.

I've been to Hell, and I'm trying to crawl back out of that pit. I know that I don't want to go back to drugs, and this is the best feeling in the world. But what if one day temptation knocks on my door? Not knowing what I'm going to do is a very frightening feeling.

Right now you're smoking a little pot or thinking about trying it. And speed sounds good to you. You say LSD isn't that bad. Well, don't fool yourself. You think you can handle it. Didn't we all.

I'm not going anywhere today. I'm not going anywhere tomorrow or the next day. In here my choices are made for me. I just go by the rules that are laid down for me. When I do get out of here, I pray that I am strong enough to stay clean. But drugs have a way of pulling you like a magnet back into Hell.

That's why I'm telling you all this. I hope you don't go where I have been. You're still young enough and strong enough to make a choice. I pray that choice is to get clean or stay clean.

I have lots of time to think now. I think about you because I get awfully lonely in here.

**Thomasina R. Toles  
North Natchez-Adams High School  
First Place Award Informal Essay**



## Is 1984 Coming?

In 1949 George Orwell's controversial book 1984 was published. 1984 is a political novel. It deals not only with communism and socialism, but also with Western governments. Trends in America and the world reveal a frightening resemblance to the early development of George Orwell's society portrayed in 1984. In his world, an elite headed by an abstract Big Brother controlled every person's thoughts and actions through terror — the Thought Police.

America has had for the past forty years, through television and other advances in technology, the ability to continually survey everyone's private life and to keep up an unremitting stream of propaganda, thereby enforcing complete obedience and uniformity: each of these things was done in 1984. Shock treatment, used in 1984 to bring about conformity, is used today in helping the severely depressed.

Doublethink is the ability to believe two conflicting ideas simultaneously. In America today, the ideals of individualism and initiative are praised, but the United States is an industrial nation made up of large corporations. Through that competition and government bureaucracy and regulations, the initiative and individualism of the small American farmer or businessman has almost disappeared. These ideals are now only words, though many people believe them wholeheartedly.

Newspeak was the official language in Oceania, one of the three superpowers in 1984. Newspeak was made mainly of compound words whose meanings were rigidly defined. Any word not needed or not proper was simply eliminated. Thus the language expressed only desirable thoughts and prevented arriving at other meanings through indirect methods. Many employees of the Ministry of Truth worked at reducing the number of words even more, so that in the end the purpose of Newspeak would be achieved: "... to make all other modes of thought impossible." One cannot have unorthodox thoughts if there are no words to express those thoughts. Even though there is no concentrated destruction of significant numbers of words in America, "bureaucratese" is making the language almost as meaningless.

The attitude of the children in 1984 was alarming, though logical. At an early age they joined organizations and were taught to be on the lookout for any sign of unorthodoxy in their parents. If they found some, immediately the "child heroes" would turn their parents over to the Thought Police. Adults would betray each other, too, for everyone was out to protect his own interests. This selfish, uncaring tendency is quite prevalent in America today. Be a success at whatever cost. Watch out for yourself only and to heck with the other fellow.

Can America, the land of democracy and freedom, ever evolve into the nightmare of 1984? The American people are psychologically and socially ready right now. The main reason is apathy. Man cares only for himself and for preserving his preferably affluent lifestyle. Anything can happen, just as long as "I" am not inconvenienced. When Americans have this attitude they can be very easily manipulated.

Whoever takes advantage of this need not be a dictator. The authority could be legislative or judicial. Orwell says that the controllers of 1984 are "bureaucrats, scientists, technicians, trade-union organizers, publicity experts, sociologists . . . professional politicians. These people . . . (were) brought together by the barren world of monopoly industry and centralized government."

But, American human beings could never accept the cruel world of 1984. Could they? Orwell mentions the use of hostages, among other things, as being commonly accepted. Terroism is raking the world now. Moral standards have disappeared. What was morally unthinkable a few years ago is reality today. What about a few years from now — four? Is it but a step to 1984?

Jennifer Day  
Brookhaven High School  
First Place Award Formal Essay



## CONTRIBUTORS

Hugh Bush, a sophomore from New Hebron, is majoring in pre-med.

Jennifer Day, a senior at Brookhaven High School, sent her essay, "Is 1984 Coming?" to Washington University in St. Louis for the Mylonas Honorary Scholarship Competition. She has become a semifinalist.

Margaret Fleming, a freshman from Crystal Springs, plans to be an elementary teacher.

Don Hardy, a freshman art major, is from Rugby, North Dakota. Don's essay "The Last of Its Kind," appeared in *Microcosm*, Vol. VII, Number 1.

Sudie Jordan, a history major, is a freshman from Enterprise.

Tammy Lyon, a sophomore from Crystal Springs, is majoring in journalism. Her work first appeared in *Microcosm* when she was in the tenth grade.

Katherine Newby, a special student from Brookhaven, is a volunteer worker and a columnist from the *Brookhaven Daily Leader*.

Cecil Pollan, a sophomore from Roxie, is majoring in English.

Sharon Smith, whose work first appeared in *Microcosm* when she was in the tenth grade, is a sophomore. She is majoring in journalism.

Tammy Melissa Smith, a student at Brookhaven High School, plans to study library and information science in order to become a librarian in a large city library.

Gloria Stone, a sophomore from Crystal Springs, is in pre-med. She is a registered nurse, a wife, and a mother.

Thomasina Toles, a student at North Natchez-Adams High School, also likes to write poetry.

Andy White, a student at New Hebron Attendance Center, enjoys working in plays.

Although *Microcosm* would like to print all the winning entries in the junior division, space prohibits our doing so. The high school students in Copiah-Lincoln's district entered thirty-one short stories, sixty poems, and eighteen essays in the competition.

The staff had an enjoyable, yet difficult task, in judging these entries. We are listing below the entries which could not be printed, but entries which surely deserve to be read.

Short Stories: Brenda Lynn Smith, Brookhaven Academy, "The Finding of A Future" Second Place; Heidi Marler, Copiah Academy, "Teams" Third Place; Linda Bachman, Brookhaven High School, "The Stairs" Honorable Mention.

Poetry: Rachele Doty, Brookhaven High School, "Mountains" Second Place; Glenda Stalans, New Hebron Attendance Center, "The Eagle" Third Place.

Informal Essay: Harold Walters, South Natchez-Adams County High School, "The Good Die Young" Second Place; Elizabeth Wirtz, South Natchez-Adams County High School, "Ravine World" Third Place; Suellen Furlow, Brookhaven High School, "Number One" Honorable Mention; Ed Ricci, South Natchez-Adams County High School, "Fathers" Honorable Mention





